



YOUR ROOMMATE'S ROOMMATE

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Your Roommate's Roommate

Becoming a roommate is nothing to take up lightly, like tatting or safe-cracking, because failure can practically ruin your chances for a happy old age. But of course you need not fail. You may be funny some ways but you know it, and you don't intend to perpetuate your present personality in brass.



One reason you're going away to college is that you know room-mating is the best possible experience for successful matrimony, airplane travel, 'or how-to-move-around-in-a-tight-place, and you are quite willing to have a double chin knocked off every time you stick your neck out. In your own charming way, you intend to be a success as a RM. Even if it costs something. Well, here's how!



Wait Till She Asks You

Maybe your RM won't realize she needs your advice—at first. Maybe she knows where she wants her pictures hung, her mascot perched, her radio plugged in. Maybe she knows she has to wear silk hose to dinner and open doors for the faculty. Maybe someone has already told her which bell means what, which girls mean whether, which boys mean nothing, something, everything. Maybe she just naturally begins where you leave off. Or maybe she can't learn. So wait till she asks you.

That gives you time to size her up without jumping to exclusions. Besides, you've got all year to probe, and the better secrets seep slowly. Open up genially but don't force the cerebration. Shyness wears off a lot more comfortably than it wears on. Just hold back your advice for a couple of sheets of the calendar and the day will come when she'll ask you what to gargle, which stairs creak least, how much mascara is plenty. She'll ask. By minding your tempo you have everything to gain and nothing to lose except your chance for a long and happy life together.



Forget Your Grandmother

Don't forget to write her on her birthday or just before yours, but forget that she's a Carter of Cartersville. College is your chance for a clean start unweighted by distinction. Sponge off the slate. Forgive your father all the things he's vice-president of. Forgive your mother her high expectations at golf, her skill with an egg-beater, or any other attainment which makes her the neighborhood wonder. Forgive your brother his all-star rating. Forgive your father's second-cousin's wife who won the Pulitzer prize. Forgive and forget. After all, even if the family tree is loaded with success apples, maybe you are just a graft of lemon and it takes a lot more horticulture to make a good lemon pay. That's why you came to college.

Funny thing, the math professor is not going to grade your trig on the basis of your uncle's bowling score. In a pretty real way, you're on your own now. Much more dramatic to have an upper-classman, along about mid-year, sing out in surprise, "Are you one of the Joshua Brown-Jones!" than for you to have paid for your own clique on entrance. Well, you got the point the first time.



While you're forgetting, forget that your house has seven bathrooms and you aren't used to paddling down a long hall for the privilege of brushing your teeth. Remember? — you picked *this* college. Forget that they do things different Back East or Down South or Out West or Where You Came From. When in Rome, go just as far with the Romans as you can trudge along without getting cultural flat-foot. Chances are, you may strengthen your insteps. Besides, the most brilliant can still learn something.



Don't Back Into Tomorrow

When you begin to dwell among the has-beens and the once-wases, you're on your way out even though the birthday cake sports a scant seventeen candles. Sure, you were a caramelized pippin when you led the Grand March at the Junior-Senior prom last year. Now you're barely among those present at the opening stunt night. So whither? Do you get out the dog-eared memory book and drag RM down the lane to your Past? Tsk! Tsk! It's forward does it.

Si, Senorita, this campus is something cockeyed. Too big or too small, too busy, too dull or too sociable. Home was cosier, rosier, and the food was better. The H. S. auditorium was air-conditioned. Your parents trusted you and didn't make you sign out every time you reached for a door knob. You're plenty glad that you have your return ticket; Dad thought you might as well have it on hand for Christmas vacation. Good old Dad! Good old Moms! Good old—

Why, Good old You. You're no backer-outer. You're going to march down the months, one day at a time, until you come out with your year's grades in your pocket. "Listen, RM, that was all spoofing. A touch of hay fever always makes me weevily. Now tomorrow we will—"

You bet, we will! Where there's a will there's a sunrise, and over the hill lies—orchids, cum laude, and you name your first daughter for me, RM, and I'll name mine for you.



Borrow for Sorrow

There are few worse ways to bolster the wilted ego than by becoming a wholesale lender. Ex: RM starts off in her blue tailored and you see that your red purse, genu-wine leather and shouting Saks, would flip the trick. So barrel-hearted you presses it on her. Finally she accepts—reluctantly, we hope, we hope. Off on her date, the purse slides out the car door into a mud puddle, is missed some time later, retrieved, dried, dusted and returned. RM is practically in tears which you can scarcely mop up because you yourself are swallowing lumps as large as winesaps. However, having learned nothing—for after all, this is only experience and you are paying to get your learning from books—you go right on proving to the whole floor that an Only Child need not be Selfish. “Here, darling, take this and this and this.” Pretty soon you have enough relics of your sainthood to fill a church. Lipstick on your white chiffon, hole burned in your ski-suit, broken string on your racquet, strap off your favorite slipper. Each ‘little accident’ is a nick in someone’s good opinion of herself and hence a tiny nub of resentment against you. No? Well, wait until you get into advanced psychology and delve into the subconscious.

Of course, there is a time to borrow and a time to lend just as there is a time for reversing the charges and a time for walking home. Emergencies, all. Obviously, some common property is plain common sense. A couple of cozy RM's do not need two of every text book, two cameras, two phonographs, two alarm clocks. But when you feel yourself about to borrow anything more perishable than a hammer, just ask yourself: In my borrowing capacity, am I a leach, a lug or a loon? In fact, whenever you feel yourself about to lend or borrow, stop and take deep breathing exercises or run around the mile track. In other words, think it over. If you covet RM's ermine wrap-around, just love it and leave it. Maybe your BF prefers your homey little skunk anyhow. Remember, simple is smart and YOUR things are part of YOUR personality. Same to her. Individuality in the species is evolution's most daring success-story.



Suppress Your Belongings

Two in a room, it's hard to tell where you leave off and the other fellow begins. She uses your bobby-pins more often than you do; you couldn't get along without her sewing kit. But when it comes to picking up, the bobby-pins are yours; you bought them. And the sewing kit is yours, too; you used it. Operate on both theories at once because there's no price too high for a neat dwelling place. Meaning neat to the bones. Dresser-drawers ship-shape; clothes hung in order—party-gowns, 'good' dresses, tailoreds, sports, and on down the line; shoes on their trees, laundry in its bag, and all that solid hickory philosophy about a place for everything and everything where you reach for it. Because why?

Because the correlation is breath-takingly high between an orderly habitat and an orderly mind. Don't ask which begets which because, chicken or egg, they follow one another down the grooves of your personality. And who wants an orderly personality? Well, you will when you start keeping house on estate-scale, commuting between continents, bringing up babies or any other six-figure enterprise. Sooner or later, everything else will desert you in some double-barreled crisis,

and only your own well-disciplined mind-body reflexes can save the skin you love most to touch. It's on the books that if you can suppress your belongings so that when your RM looks back on your jaunty days together she thinks of you and not of your truck, why then you're quite somebody in your own right. In retrospect, a-nawful lot of roommates seem to be nine-tenths stray mules, misplaced pajamas, scattered letters, and an assortment of masculine pictures.

That well-groomed and well-grounded smart look which wears well in all weathers cannot be fostered in a RM if her RM leaves hair-in-the-comb or otherwise scatters the accessories of her personality all over the place.



Choke Before You Gossip

"I couldn't help overhearing——."

"With my own eyes I saw——."

"She means it all right but——."

"Maybe you ought to know——."

Here, kitty, kitty, kitty. Choking is too good for you. Drowning would be better, really, because somewhat more permanent. If you gossip, you've already tied the millstone around your neck. All that's left is to plunge into the middle of the Adriatic. Don't choose the Mississippi because we like our boatribe on the river.

You don't fool anyone when you gossip, no matter how you purr and wave your Persian tail. Well, maybe you fool yourself. Perhaps you do actually know how to buff some obtuse corners off that diamond in the rough. But a sure way to demonstrate to yourself that you are on the level is to take the matter up with her first-hand. Make it a reciprocal vivisection, and then when you crawl down off your own operating table, ask for a week's convalescence before you talk over her case.



Spend Your Own Money

Not all over town, but if and when There's really no good place, short of liquid air refrigeration, for the girl who has more money than most and insists upon Johnny-Apple-seeding it from one campus eating place to another, expecting her RM to come along and sow the next crop. It takes a nice sensitivity, delicate as a Johnansson gauge block to remember the exact size and thickness of your partner's bank balance so that you do not shout for new drapes, bigger hot-fudges, more expansive week ends at the wrong stage of the checkbook.

Some girls are terribly sensible about the BF's pocketbook, remembering that he's on his way up, and they don't ask to drive three times around Central Park every time they come home from a movie. But they may forget entirely that the RM could use that fifty cents she loaned for a toothbrush. Let your memory for debts be like unto the Socrates' for the rooster.

And of course, when it's Dutch treat, don't get into the tanglefoot. Quick like a bunny, reach for your purse and pay for your own carrot-tops. No friendship ever went into the discard because both kept their own ledgers, paid their own bills, and hoarded their own telephone slugs.



Waste Your Own Time

On any campus, wasting other people's time is the eighth and most deadly sin. Time-stealing is the super-grand larceny of the spirit and especially diabolical when applied to the RM entrusted by benign Providence to your care. As you to hers.

Fortunately you can tell when a spell of time-wasting is coming on: you are restless, four walls seem too many and your sphere of influence too cramped. You break out with splotches of rhetoric, such as: "Listen to this—" (waving aloft a book of poetry, a letter from Aunt Janice, or a comic strip) or "That sort of reminds me of the time—" Not that a time-waster needs a take-off.

In the name of Justice and the six-weeks tests, don't turn on the radio when the RM is trying to study; don't ask to have a hem pinned up, a reference looked up or your spirits bucked up. Don't tear paper, file nails or etch on glass. Time is an imponderable compounded of mood and necessity—her mood and her necessity. You just keep out of her light. And then—and then—comes a night when she'll do the same for you.

However, you shouldn't confuse time-wasting with doing nothing. To do nothing is important now and then. College life needs nuances. Even the tall corn of Iowa would shrivel to a crisp if it had to run around the field day and night. Probably the hours you'll treasure longest are the hours you did nothing—except maybe listen to the rain—together. The shared life is a good investment when you've got something to share, but when you divide nothing by two, the answer will not buy a pair of nylon hose.

Naturally and of course, if you don't waste your own time, you aren't likely to waste the RM's because integrity is a hardy perennial blooming for the just and the unjust. Your roommate's roommate's got character, that's what and who's got it. When the fiftieth reunion rolls around, she can afford to take her hair down and hold her chin high.

A coke—in a hand-blown bottle—to the success of your RM's RM!



